A Developmental Services Bulletin from the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Greetings from the Deputy Minister

It is my pleasure to introduce to you our first issue of *Spotlight on Transformation*.

Since the government's announcement of the transformation of developmental services we have heard from individuals, families, service providers and provincial organizations about how we can build a service system across the province that is fair to people who have a developmental disability and their families, easier to access and sustainable for the long term. You told us that you want more direct and ongoing communication from us — and we heard you. We will be issuing bulletins in real time as news happens to keep you informed about the work being done and give you an idea of what to look for in the coming months.

I'm thrilled to be sharing our progress on transformation with you, and hope that you find these bulletins helpful as we move forward.

Kevin Costante
Deputy Minister

Getting the right information to the people who need it

As part of DS transformation, the ministry is working with stakeholder groups to make it easier for self-advocates, families, and others to find the information they need about developmental services and supports.

During the 2006 spring consultations, the ministry learned from self-advocates and families that it is difficult to get accurate, timely information about services when they are needed. As a result, the ministry held meetings in a number of communities across the province to identify information needs and gaps.

The ministry is assessing the information that is currently available and comparing it to what families and self-advocates said they needed to navigate the developmental services system. We are also looking at the best way to make the information available to everyone. We will be using this bulletin to keep you in the loop as we move forward.

Passport to Opportunities

The innovative Passport program announced in July 2005 has sparked overwhelming interest. More than 2,400 applications have been received across the province since its introduction. To date, more than 800 individuals who have a developmental disability and have left school have been approved for opportunities for community participation supports (formerly known as day activities). Passport participants and their families can choose to develop self-directed plans and to use direct funding to manage and purchase their own community participation supports. The ministry is looking at ways to further develop the program to help it grow in an organized and sustainable fashion.

Currently, applications continue to be accepted for future funding at community agencies delivering Passport. For more information about the initiative, see "Programs for Young Adults who have Left School" on the ministry's website.

Long-term Care Homes Protocol Being Reviewed

The long-term care home access protocol developed jointly by the Ministries of Community and Social Services and Health and Long-Term Care is being reviewed. The protocol supports the access of aging adults with a developmental disability to the long-term care sector.

Entering a long-term care home requires careful consideration and is not suitable for everyone. The protocol recognizes that adults with a developmental disability have the same rights as all individuals to access a long-term care home if they are eligible and if that is where they or their substitute decision makers have chosen for them to live. As we continue to transform developmental services in Ontario, we remain committed to creating more inclusive communities.

Both ministries are reviewing the protocol. Progress and results will be reported here.

Mentoring

Since its launch in March 2006, mentoring is proving to be a successful element of DS transformation. Students and adult mentors are equally benefiting from the program. The program was introduced in 28 schools in Peterborough, Huntsville, Alexandria and Tillsonburg and expanded to Sault Ste. Marie last November.

The ministry is proud to be partnering with the Ontario Community Inclusion Project, People First of Ontario, and other self-advocacy groups. We are grateful for the efforts of the adult mentors and mentor coordinators for making mentoring a positive reality for many young people in Ontario.

Coming Soon: Application Package Pilot

The government is moving forward on its commitment to make the application process in developmental services more consistent, fair, and equitable across the province. Through the extraordinary dedication and commitment of a reference group of family advocacy organizations, self-advocates, and agencies we now have a unanimously endorsed framework for the application package. The ministry is pilot testing this application package in 12 communities between now and October 2007. The purpose of the pilot project is to get feedback on the following:

- Are the individual questions worded in a way that generates accurate answers?
- Are all the questions necessary or are fewer or different questions sufficient to generate the necessary information?
- Does the combination of the information from the completion of the Supports Intensity Scale and other parts of the application generate sufficient information for service and support decisions?
- What additional information needs to be incorporated into an interviewer manual to support understanding and help the interviewer implement this process?
- Finally, does the application gather information in a consistent format that will support equitable service decisions for individuals regardless of where they live in Ontario?

The agencies that will participate in the pilot are:

- L'Association pour l'integration sociale d'Ottawa (AISO)
- Christian Horizons (Central District) – GTA
- Community Living South Muskoka
- Community Living Thunder Bay
- Community Living Toronto
- Contact Niagara
- Extend-A-Family - Waterloo Region
- Ongwanada, Kingston
- Reena, GTA
- Sunbeam Residential Development Centre, Kitchener
- Woodstock Developmental Services, and
- York Support Services Network

- Approximately 2,200 volunteers who have a developmental disability will participate in the pilots over the course of the year, representing a cross-section of support needs, communities, languages, geographic and service settings.

We will keep you up to date on our progress in future issues.

Partnership Table Provides Invaluable Advice on Transformation

When the DS transformation was announced in 2004, a Joint Developmental Services Partnership Table was established to represent both our ministry (MCSS) and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), as well as associations of self-advocates, families and service providers in the sector. Deputy Minister Kevin Costante plays an active leadership role and attends all Partnership Table meetings.

Members include representatives from:

- Provincial Network on Developmental Services
- Family Alliance Ontario
- People First of Ontario
- the Francophone community
- MCSS, and
- MCYS.

The Partnership Table has been an invaluable resource to the Ministry in helping to build a vision and long-term plan for the transformation of the developmental services sector. Many of its members also submitted feedback on the Ministry's consultation paper, Opportunities and Action, which was the subject of a public consultation in the spring of 2006.

Through information sharing and collaboration, the Partnership Table continues to be an important voice for the DS sector. The Ministry recognizes the hard work and dedication of its members, and would like to express sincere appreciation for all of their efforts in helping us continue to transform the developmental services sector across Ontario.

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